

Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 /036 R

DRAFTED BY AF/E:GKULICK:SEH

APPROVED BY AF/E:WBCOOTE

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P R 310019Z JUL 75

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, SO US

SUBJECT: WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE ON BERBERA

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY MICHAEL MALIK OF REUTER ENTITLED
"INVITED REPORTERS BARRED FROM SOMALI INSTALLATION" APPEARED
IN THE WASHINGTON POST ON JUNE 30, 1975: QUOTE - BERBERA,
SOMALIA, JUNE 29 -- A GROUP OF FOREIGN JOURNALISTS, BROUGHT
HERE BY THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT TO DISPROVE U.S. CLAIMS THAT
THERE IS A SOVIET MISSILE BASE IN THIS SOMALI PORT, WERE
REFUSED PERMISSION TO INSPECT CERTAIN MILITARY INSTALLATIONS
TODAY.

THE GROUP, INCLUDING A TELEVISION TEAM FROM THE AMERICAN
BROADCASTING AND ME HAD BEEN BROUGHT HERE TO REFUTE U.S.
ALLEGATIONS THAT THERE IS A SOVIET MISSILE HANDLING AND
STORAGE FACILITY AS WELL AS A NAVAL BUNKERING AND SUPPLY
DEPOT AT THIS GULF OF ADEN PORT.

WE HAD REQUESTED PERMISSION TO SEE TWO AREAS THAT THE U.S.
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DEFENSE DEPARTMENT HAD LABELED IN SATELLITE PHOTOGRAPHS AS AN ASSEMBLY BUILDING AND MISSILE BUNKERS. IN HEATED EXCHANGES, MOHAMED SIAD SAMANTAR, SOMALI AMBASSADOR IN PARIS, WHO ACCOMPANIED THE GROUP FROM

MOGADISHU, THE CAPITAL, SAID WE HAD NOT BEEN PROMISED ACCESS TO SEE SOMALI MILITARY INSTALLATIONS, BUT ONLY TO BE SHOWN THERE WAS NO "SOVIET BASE" IN BERBERA.

EARLIER THIS WEEK THE SOMALI AMBASSADOR IN NAIROBI HAD INVITED SEVERAL JOURNALISTS AND TOLD US SPECIFICALLY THAT WE COULD TAKE THE U.S. SATELLITE PHOTOGRAPHS TO BERBERA AND SEE EVERYTHING THEY SHOWED.

AFTER WE HAD BEEN SHOWN EVERY HOSPITALITY OVER THE LAST TWO DAYS, THE TROUBLE STARTED THIS AFTERNOON AS WE DROVE UP TO AN AREA JUST WEST OF BERBERA PORT, WHICH IS SURROUNDED BY A WALL AND GUARDED BY SOMALI SAILORS WITH RIFLES AND FIXED BAYONETS.

THE GUARDS INSISTED THAT ALL CAMERAS BE PUT AWAY AND WE WERE THEN TOLD THAT WE COULD NOT ENTER BECAUSE IT WAS A SOMALI MILITARY AREA.

"YOU HAVE SEEN BERBERA AND CAN SEE THERE IS NO SOVIET MILITARY BASE", SAMANTAR SAID.

AFTER PROTESTS, WE WERE ALLOWED TO ENTER WITHOUT CAMERAS BUT AFTER WALKING FOR ONLY A COUPLE OF HUNDRED YARDS WE WERE TOLD TO STOP JUST WITHIN SIGHT OF A TWO-STORY CONCRETE, HANGARLIKE BUILDING THAT APPEARED TO BE THE ONE MARKED AS "HIGH-BAY CHECK-OUT ASSEMBLY BUILDING" IN THE U.S. PHOTOGRAPHS.

WE WERE AGAIN TOLD: "NOW YOU HAVE SEEN IT", AND ESCORTED OUT OF THE CAMP.

IN A FINAL ANSWER TO QUESTIONS, SAMANTAR SAID: "NO GOVERNMENT IN THE WORLD COULD ALLOW JOURNALISTS TO INSPECT ITS NATIONAL MILITARY INSTALLATIONS. WHY DO YOU WANT TO SEE WHERE WE KEEP OUR AMMUNITION?" LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WHEN CHALLENGED WITH THE FACT THAT THE TERMS OF THE UNSOLICITED INVITATION HAD BEEN TO SEE WHAT WE LIKED, HE INSISTED THAT WE HAD BEEN ALLOWED TO SEE THAT THERE WAS NO "SOVIET BASE" AS HAD BEEN ALLEGED. END QUOTE. INGERSOLL

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BERBERA, JOURNALISTS, MILITARY BASES, PRESS COMMENTS, VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 JUN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE154735
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: GKULICK:SEH
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: n/a
Errors: n/a
Film Number: D750227-0213
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750697/aaaaheav.tel
Line Count: 117
Locator: TEXT ON MICROFILM, TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ORIGIN AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 MAY 2003 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <28 OCT 2003 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> wfs 971104
Subject: WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE ON BERBERA THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY MICHAEL MALIK OF REUTER ENTITLED
TAGS: MARR, PFOR, SO, US
To: MOGADISCIO
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006